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son, of the Case School of Applied Science, has been appointed head of the department of applied mechanics, to fill the place vacant by the death of Professor E. L. Hancock; H. S. Ives has been promoted to be professor of railroad engineering; Dr. A. W. Hull, to be assistant professor of physics, and T. R. Briggs has been appointed instructor in chemistry.

WALTER FENNO DEARBORN, Ph.D. (Columbia), recently professor in the school of education of the University of Chicago, has been appointed assistant professor of education at Harvard University.

DR. HARLAN UPDEGRAFF, specialist in school administration, United States Bureau of Education, has been appointed professor of education and head of that department in Northwestern University.

MR. JAMES KNOX TAYLOR, supervising architect of the treasury department, has been elected professor of architecture in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

DR. R. F. BAUNEL, of the department of chemistry of Syracuse University, has accepted an appointment as associate professor of organic chemistry at Bryn Mawr.

THE board of trustees of Jefferson Medical College has elected to the chair of chemistry, made vacant by the resignation of Dr. James W. Holland, Professor Philip B. Hawk, of the University of Illinois.

MR. H. T. PLUMMER, assistant at the Oxford University Observatory, has been appointed Andrews professor of astronomy at Dublin University and astronomer royal of Ireland, as successor to Professor E. T. Whittaker, who has been called to Edinburgh University to the chair of mathematics vacant by the death of Professor Chrystal.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

PRIORITY VS. NOMINA CONSERVANDA

WE all agree that nomenclature is a means, not an end, and should be of service alike to general or special workers in other lines as well as to the student of a restricted group.

We must also admit the human element, the personal equation, which is an important factor in applying the law of priority as well as in the selection of *nomina conservanda*—mistakes may be made in either case. It can hardly better matters to defer the correction of an error till some central representative body (usually with no special knowledge of the particular problem) gives assent to a change several years after the mistake has been discovered.

The men of science should stand for truth and freedom to proclaim the truth. An investigator should not be expected to hold an important contribution three to five years in order to secure the assent of any body to an obviously necessary change. Some scientific men may even desire to exercise a little personal discretion as to what names they will employ. Chaos does not necessarily follow unless we attempt to keep in mind the latest changes in all groups. Some appear to be taking priority too seriously; others propose new genera with inadequate descriptions or figures and, too frequently, in obscure, more or less irrelevant notes; while synonymy may be indicated with even less regard for the convenience of the investigator. These practises are certainly not commendable, since they may be serious stumbling blocks for subsequent workers. The writer believes in the strict application of the law of priority because it appears to be the only ultimately stable basis for nomenclature, and yet he practises or endeavors to practise conservatism in accepting changes in groups with which he is comparatively unfamiliar. A scientific man need not apologize for not using the very latest generic term. He may prefer to retain an open mind toward the innovation and adopt it with the appearance of a comprehensive memoir or a standard catalogue.

Let us see how the strict application of the law of priority works out in the gall midges or Itonidæ, much better known as the Cecidomyiidæ. *Itonida*, it may be recalled, was one of Meigen's names published in 1800, *Cecidomyia* being substituted therefor in 1803. In

the past, *Cecidomyia* has been applied in a restricted sense by different students to forms referable to widely separated tribes (*Dasyneuriariæ* and *Itonidinariæ*), not to mention the indiscriminate use of the name for any or almost any gall-making midge. It was necessary, under the old state of affairs, to either know the species or the sense in which the name *Cecidomyia* was used in a paper before one could form a definite concept of the characters for which the term stood in that particular instance. The loose application of this name to a thousand or more species referable to over 150 genera, did not materially enhance the value of the word as a precise scientific designation. In this instance the use of the prior *Itonida*, which has not been misapplied, savors more of common sense than an attempt to put among the *nomina conservanda* the variously defined and loosely applied *Cecidomyia*, even though the latter has become well established and is generally used in economic literature. A survey of the group would show that even if *Cecidomyia* was retained, it could be applied to but one genus, and that would mean that the accepted generic name for most of the economic species must of necessity be changed. *Cecidomyia* is a valuable designation and can and should be employed as the name of a biological group.

The gall midges may present exceptional conditions. We are by no means certain that the strict application of the law of priority means more incumbrances and difficulties than the establishment of *nomina conservanda*. Many of the changes necessitated by the law of priority have been made. Shall we reverse ourselves? If so, how many will accept this change of attitude and to what extent shall we go? If "well-established" or "long-used" names are desirable, how shall we select these? Is usage by the biologist, general zoologist, taxonomist, the economic entomologist or the agriculturist to determine which shall be employed? Further study will inevitably result in closer generic definition. Shall we recognize *Cecidomyia* as a valid genus with *destructor* Say as type because this is the more important agricultural species—and it is the

practical entomologist who has done most to make this name current, or accept *pini* DeGeer as type and be compelled to use a less familiar term in economic literature?

In other words, the establishment of *nomina conservanda* may fix the generic term and designate the type, only to find later that the latter is not cogenetic with the species which has made the generic name common property. This is strikingly shown by referring to a few of the well-known American forms which probably would have been changed even if *nomina conservanda* had been in existence. The following are a few well-known species which have been shifted from one genus to another because of a more correct generic definition:

Egeria exitiosa, now *Sanninoidea*,
Arctia isabella, now *Isia*,
Orgyia leucostigma, now *Hemerocampa*,
Anisopteryx pometaria, now *Alsophila*,
A. vernata, now *Paleacrita*,
Incurvaria acerifoliella, now *Paraclemensia*.

The above names have been widely current as well as many others now relegated to synonymy, and their retention is impossible unless generic limitations are broadened, and then it would be necessary to harmonize very wide divergencies of opinion. Has any one an adequate notion as to just how much relief would be afforded by the establishment of *nomina conservanda*? Is there not a possibility that the benefits supposed to accrue therefrom have been greatly overestimated?

Finally, has sufficient time elapsed to permit a determination of the wisdom or unwisdom of a strict adherence to the law of priority? Can we assure ourselves that a comfortable adjustment to existing conditions is impossible for most individuals?

E. P. FELT

ALBANY, N. Y.,
 May 10, 1912

HERMAPHRODITE SHAD IN THE DELAWARE

INSTANCES of hermaphroditism occur occasionally in the shad (*Alosa sapidissima*) taken during the spring in our fisheries, though they are usually so infrequent as to arouse the curiosity of the fishermen. I know of two